DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 398 628 EA 027 791

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TITLE Teachers' Opinions of the Teacher Evaluation Process.
PUB DATE [96]
NOTE 13p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Discipline Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; Instructional Effectiveness; Job Performance; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Effectiveness; *Teacher Evaluation; Teacher Improvement; *Teacher Supervision

ABSTRACT

Most educators would agree that the real purpose of evaluation is to improve instruction. This paper presents findings of a study that identified teachers' attitudes toward the teacher evaluation process. Data were derived from a questionnaire administered to 30 public school teachers--15 elementary and 15 secondary. A chi-square analysis was used to determine statistical significance. The majority of teachers favored the evaluation process; however, they desired to be more involved in it. Most of the sample believed that the principal should conduct the evaluation and that the process should be formative prior to being summative. Teachers also wanted pre- and post-conference evaluations. It is recommended that the evaluation process be updated and changed to include teachers' input. One table is included. (LMI)

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Statement of the Problem

Teachers Opinions of the Teacher Evaluation Process

Teacher evaluation is one of the most controversial issues in education. It is a complex and highly debated issue in the age of reform and contract negotiations. There has been negative publicity concerning low achievement in many schools across the United States. Schools are placed on remediation and probation. Some laws are passed to suspend teachers with or without pay or even dismiss teachers. Negative publicity has caused many parents to work toward replacing incompetent teachers with competent ones. One way to determine incompetence is through the use of teacher evaluations.

Many people perceive evaluation as quality control in teaching and a means to weed out incompetent teachers. Teachers perceive evaluation as a part of the job of the principal. Most authorities would agree that the real purpose of evaluation is to improve instruction received by the students. Current trends and reform efforts point toward evaluations for improvement of instruction. It is also evident that peer evaluations should be considered.

Teachers are also concerned with evaluations since it may affect their job. They are becoming more involved in planning and monitoring their own evaluations. The purpose of this study is to explore the aspects about evaluations teachers like or dislike, and what they would like to change or improve. The intent of the findings is to provide suggestions on how to improve the evaluation process for teachers and administrators.

Teacher evaluation started with supervisors. Once upon a time supervisors were primarily engaged in inspection, an approach based on the assumption that an

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educational supervisor's job was to find all the wrong things that teachers were doing in their classrooms. Teachers were not often well educated and frequently stayed only a step ahead of their their students in basic skills. Frederick Taylor (1916) devised techniquos known as scientific management. Workers were viewed as appendages of management and as such were hired to carry out prespecified duties in accordance with the wishes of management. These ideas carry over to school supervision when teachers are viewed as implementors of highly refined curriculum and teaching systems where close supervision is practiced to ensure that teachers are teaching in the way in which they are supposed to and that they are carefully following approved guidelines and teaching protocols. Human relations supervision had its origin in the democratic administration with Elton Mayo during the 1930's (Darash and Playko,1995).

Early in the history of the United States, educators were evaluated on their traits and attributes. Many believed quality was based on such criteria as good grooming, loud voice, proper speech, good looks, and personality. Because of this a list of traits were developed and used to measure and evaluate teachers. Early in the twentieth century lists of desirable skills were identified and were evaluated by either checking them in a scale (Wilson and Wood, 1996).

Evaluation is the process of determining the basic worth of something by measuring that "something" against established standards or criteria. Currents trends point toward performance for improvement. Some states such as Tennessee, Georgia and Florida now use student achievement as part of annual evaluation of teachers (Roe and Drake1980). However, there is a certain amount of injustice inherent in this procedure. A number of major factors that influence students are found outside the classroom and outside of the teachers's control. Students are not the same

academically from year to year. Sometimes a teacher has a large number of low achievers in a class that he or she is assigned. Teacher evaluations should be based on overall progress made by the students rather than on the achievement scores and should not be used if teachers are assigned different levels of students and if the teachers' evaluations are based on final outcome of achievement test alone.

Some administrators maintain that teacher evaluation should include the curriculum element. In such consideration teachers should be evaluated in relation to how well they make clear what content they want students to learn and at what level of function they want the content handled.

Public policy and state mandates appear to be shifting from monitoring quantity to quality, and the brunt of quality seems to have been put in the shoulders of administrators (primarily principals). The principal are the ones being held accountable for the quality of their teachers. With these new mandates there must be a time shift in order for principals to have time for more evaluating. Other administrative tasks will necessarily be given less time in order to comply with new mandates Wilson & Wood 1996).

Stiggins (1986), reviewed the reasons for teacher evaluations. Some instruments or evaluations are used for hiring, firing, promotion, and merit pay for teachers. These instruments are used as measures of accountability and competence. These data are normally required by law (state) to demonstrate at least minimum competence of teachers, and must be verifiably objectives and standardized for all teachers and administrators. However, the other main purpose for evaluation is teacher growth.

Growth systems usually include peer assessment from other teachers, students evaluation, as well as administrator evaluations. These evaluations give valuable information and feedback to teachers concerning how they are being perceived.

These evaluations are for growth. Peer and student evaluation should not be used for dismissal or promotion.

Fenner and Rothberb (1991) surveyed two hundred and thirty teachers from many different schools in eight central Florida counties. Their study was conducted to determine teachers' perceptions of teacher assessment. Sixty-five percent of the respondents were teachers from elementary schools, and 17 percent from high schools. Teaching experience ranged from 15 percent with 0-2 years, 24 percent with 3 to 5 years, 25 percent with 6 to 10 years, 19 percent with 11 to 15 years, and 19 percent with 16 or more years of experience. They found an overwhelming positive response concerning peer observation and peer professional coaching. Eighty percent of the respondents said observation of other teachers would be helpful to their professional growth, 17 percent were not sure of the method, and 3 percent said it would make them feel uncomfortable. Seventy-seven percent of teachers said they would welcome being observed by other teachers, and most surprising, 60 percent said they would consider outside, objective observation and feedback. Eight percent of the people said they would not trust the observation to be confidential.

Kauchak, et al (1985) used two data sources to investigate teachers' attitudes toward evaluation practices. The primary source was interviews conducted in the state of Utah. The interview questions were to determine the relationship between teachers' view of teaching and their attitudes to various means of evaluating teaching. The second source of data was a questionnaire administered to teachers in Utah and Florida. The questionnaires focused on principal visits, student reports, achievement test scores, and peer evaluation.

This research showed that principal visits were seen as part of perfunctory duties, designed to maintain the status quo than to improve instruction or to evaluate. A major problem with principal visits was teachers' perception of the principal's lack of

supervisory or instructional competence. In addition to competence of the principal, teachers identified length and frequency of visits as a major evaluation problem. Some teachers wanted evaluations more longer, frequent, and informative. One third of the teachers felt that student evaluations were a valuable source on information, but the group indicated that professional judgment needed to be exercised in interpreting these evaluations. The percentage of teachers raising doubt about the use of student evaluations was proportionally greatest at the elementary level and at least the secondary level. However, the responses were strong and against using achievement test scores to evaluate teachers. The problem identified in this area focused on the casual link between teacher performance and student outcomes. Teachers felt that performance on a test administered one year may be wholly dependent on that year's teacher's performance but rather was the result of the efforts of many teachers. On the other hand, teachers favored peer evaluations. The most consistent concern voiced by teachers when asked about peer evaluation was the possibility that this practice would lead to increased professional competition and isolation in schools. They suggested that the peer evaluator come from the same subject matter area or from the same grade level.

Bunting and Lombard (1989) found that teachers in Belfast endorsed forms of appraisal based on professional criteria such as self-evaluation and peer view. Most firmly rejected were procedures for assessment by those outside the profession (pupils and parents). Assessment by authority figures received a mixed response, with appraisal by inspector being the least objectionable. School tests were seen as an acceptable form of appraisal by over one third of the teachers. Assessments based upon overall school results were generally less favorably regarded.

Lowther and Stark surveyed 1054 teachers in Michigan. They found that 89 percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that teachers should assess their

own work. Administrators' judgments were viewed as appropriate. About 65 percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that classroom observations by administrators should be used, and 77 percent were accepting of administrators judgments regarding personal growth. Close behind in order of acceptance were teacher peer assessment. Teachers viewed both the assessment of test results and student and parent judgments in teacher evaluation negatively.

Teacher evaluation is difficult. From the review of literature, Teachers were quite favorable toward the evaluation process. It was evident that teachers would like to have peer and self-assessment assessment as part of the process. One of the primary criticisms of teacher evaluations is that they are incapable of providing meaningful insight into teacher competence. Many teachers saw evaluations as perfunctory requirements, in that principals make brief visits and hurried conferences in order to comply with school districts policies. Teachers favored administrators' judgments, and wanted longer and more informative evaluations. Elementary teachers were doubtful about using student evaluations. They felt that students were not good at making judgments of instructional practices.

The purposes of evaluations are to promote professional growth, and make decisions such as hiring, firing, promotions, tenure and most recently salary and merit pay. This study will determine teachers' opinions of the evaluation process.

Procedures

The population of this study will include fifty teachers from public schools. The population were composed of (35) elementary and (15) secondary teachers. Forty-four teachers will be chosen at random from the population.

The questionnaires were distributed to fifty teachers from public schools. They

were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with twenty statement by by writing A or D in the blank to the right of each item. They were asked to respond to the question, who should be involve in the process (administrator, teachers, students) and why evaluate? The completed questionnaires were placed in individual folders and returned. A questionnaire was developed consisting of twenty statements about the evaluation process. There was one question to write a response to. Teachers were asked to indicate their response by writing A or D in the blank to the right of each item. The questionnaire was pilot tested on ten teachers that were not part of the study. It was then revised to establish validity. The results of the questionnaire were tabulated by the percentages of agree, disagree to determine the teachers' opinions toward the teacher evaluation process. the Chi Square was used to determine the statistical significance (.05) of responses.

Findings of the Study

Details of the responses are given in the following table table

TABLE 1
RESPONSES TO TEACHER OPINION QUESTIONNAIRE
A AGREE B DISAGREE

N = 44

A	D	
42 95%*	2 5%	1. Evaluations should be conducted to improve instruction
33 75%*	11 25%	2. Evaluations should include an examination of student achievement
41 93%*	3 7%	3. Classroom management skills should be examined
41 93%*	3 7%	4. Bulletin boards and classroom climate should be examined

35 79%*	9 21%	5. Evaluations should weed out incompetent teachers.
21 47%	23 53%*	6. Evaluations should be used for tenure, merit pay, or promotions.
24 55%*	20 45%	7. Evaluations for tenured and non-tenured should be identical.
25 57%*	19 43%	8. Observations should be announced in advance and not sprung on teachers.
41 93%*	3 7%	9. The procedure should be pre-conference, observation, and post conference.
40 90%*	4 10%	10. When a weakness is diagnosed, principals should prescribe a remediation plan appropriate for the deficiency.
38 86%*	6 14%	11. Remediation plans should be based on summative evaluations.
43 98%*	1 2%	12. Feedback should be positive and constructive.
32 73%*	12 27%	13. The length of evaluations should be from thirty to forty minutes.
44 100%*	0	14. Teachers should have the opportunity to disagree with negative comments.
42 95%*	2 5%	15. Principals should be well educated and experienced in pedagogy and methodologies of teaching, and have the capacity to model them.
35 80%*	9 20%	16. Students should be allowed to evaluate teachers.
43 98%*	1 2%	17. Principals and teachers should set up standards on what is considered quality teaching practices.
15 34%	29 66%*	18. Tenured teachers need not be evaluated more than two or three times during a five year period.
39 89%*	5 11%	19. An agreement upon a process should be reached among principals and teachers.

34 77%*	10 23%	20	Principals should provide for peer evaluation and peer coaching to improve instruction.

* Significance at the .05 level

The data from Table 1 show that the teachers favor the evaluation process. Ninety-five percent of the respondents favored evaluations for improvement of instruction. 93 percent favored the classroom setting and seventy-five percent, student achievement, being included in evaluations. The teachers were overwhelming in favor of being included in the process. One hundred percent indicated that teachers should have the opportunity to disagree with negative comments, while 95 percent said that feedback should be constructive. A majority, 98 percent indicated that principals and teachers should set up standards on what is considered quality teaching, and 89 percent favored agreement on the process should be reached among the principal and teachers. Surprisingly, 77 percent of the respondents favored the principal providing for peer evaluation and peer coaching, and only 57 percent felt students should be allowed to evaluate teachers. On the issue of merit pay, tenure and promotions, 53 percent disagreed with using evaluations, while teachers were fairly evenly divided on evaluations for tenured and non-tenured being the same, 53 percent for and 47% against. In considering incompetence,79 percent favored evaluations being used to weed out incompetent teachers.

Many teachers wrote concerns about the evaluation process. Fifteen teachers said the process should include a formative evaluation before a summative evaluation. There should be a pre-conference to discuss what the evaluator will be looking for and what the teacher will be covering in class. Thirty-nine teachers stated they wished for a post-conference allowing the teachers to explain their teaching procedures and styles. Other teachers indicated that principals should have a remediation plan in effect for at

risk teachers. Most of the teachers wanted to become more involved in planning and monitoring their own evaluations.

The response to the question, who should evaluate, the vast majority of the respondents said the principal should evaluate and a few named others such as the assistant principal, teacher mentors, and peers. Secondary teachers indicated that the principal along with department chairs should evaluate since the chairs have specific knowledge of the content area.

The purpose of this study was to determine teachers' opinions of the teacher evaluation process.The majority of the teachers favored the evaluation process. From the findings, teachers value being involved in the process. Most important, they want others besides the principal conducting evaluations. Many of the teachers stated that the process should include formative evaluation before summative evaluation. They wanted pre-conference and post conference evaluations. A majority said evaluations should improve instruction.

The results of the findings in this study indicate that the teachers favor the teacher evaluation process. The teachers favored the principal as the person to evaluate, but indicating that observations should provide for feedback and teacher input in the process.

From the review of literature, evaluations are used for different reasons such as hiring, firings, promotions and merit pay. Evaluations can also be used for growth systems, and growth systems include peer assessment. Teachers favored the evaluation process, but many of the teachers endorsed peer and self-assessment. Based on the findings in this study, a majority of the teachers favored evaluations for improvement of instruction. Ninety-five percent of the teachers in this study indicated that principal should be well educated and experienced in teaching methodologies. In the study by Kauchak, et al, a major problem was principal's lack of supervisory or

instructional competence. The teachers felt that student evaluation was a valuable source of information, but professional judgment is needed.

The result of this study indicates that the time has come for the school system to update the evaluation process. Teachers should become more involved in the process, since the improvement of instruction is in the hands of the teachers. The teacher evaluation process will continue to be a difficult task.

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